



Our threatened cultural heritage

Our past, the legacy of this nation, is being plundered at an alarming rate by individuals who visit public lands, and take pieces of America's cultural heritage home with them. An artifact, which may have lain undisturbed in the ground for thousands of years, can be destroyed in a matter of minutes.

The unauthorized removal of artifacts from public lands has become a widespread problem, and Corps lands are no exception. Individuals casually picking up artifacts for fun or to enhance personal collections have been joined by commercial collectors digging for profit. The activities of both groups have caused extensive damage to archeological sites, resulting in an immense loss of scientific data nationwide. Consequently, researchers' efforts in acquiring knowledge about the past and reconstructing ancient lifeways have been hampered.

The cultural heritage of this country is not just the heritage of one people or one region, but the heritage of all people.

Preserving Our Cultural Heritage



Prehistoric cave shelter.

What are cultural resources?

Cultural resources are the physical remains of material culture left behind by previous generations. These remains may be from the prehistoric or historic era. In America, the prehistoric period covers the times of Native Americans until the beginning of written records. The historic period in a region begins with the arrival of Euro-American peoples and the introduction of written language.

Archeology is the science which studies physical evidence left within the ground from the living activities of past peoples. Archeologists use this evidence to reconstruct past lifeways, establish a chronology of events, and study the development of cultures. Archeological sites may be prehistoric or historic. Historians and archeologists often work together, using a combination of written documents and archeological evidence for their research.

Prehistoric cultural resources can be Indian artifacts such as an arrowhead, obsidian flakes from tool making activities, a bone needle, a stone bowl, or pottery fragments. They can also be the remains of an Indian village, a cave shelter, a camp site, or a quarry site where stones were taken for making tools. Another example is Indian rock art, such as rock carvings called petroglyphs and rock paintings called pictographs.



Petroglyph.

Historic cultural resources can be bottles, utensils, dishware, structures such as a log cabin or barn, fishwheels, shipwrecks, and transportation routes such as railroad beds and wagon trails.



Historic ceramics.



Log cabin.

When studying an archeological site such as the remains of a prehistoric village, the archeologist is interested in more than just the artifacts. For example, the locations of the artifacts both vertically and horizontally within the soil levels and their relationships to one another are extremely critical to interpreting the site.

The connection to our past is fragile. When an artifact is improperly removed from a site, virtually all of its scientific value is lost forever. Little information can be gained from an artifact taken from the ground without it having been adequately recorded during an archeological excavation.



Excavated archeological site with soil levels.

What we can learn from our past

When these sites and artifacts are saved, we can learn from them: about our times, ourselves, our culture, and our environment. People like to learn about history and prehistory. They are interested in the past. Every year millions of people visit our historic sites, museums, parks, and monuments nationwide. Many people enjoy the simple pleasure of viewing Indian artifacts, or standing at a site and feeling transported back in time.



Stone bowl.

Indian village site.

Archeological studies can help us learn about our family histories, search out our roots, and learn about our human origins. Ongoing investigations have traced our prehistory in the Pacific Northwest back almost 15,000 years and our history back to the early 1800's with the arrival of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Through archeology we can study our physical and cultural evolution which helps us put our present day lives and culture in perspective. Information about the past can enable us to cope better with the present, to gain insight into the future and to appreciate the differences between the various peoples of the world.

Archeology can help us study past environmental changes too. By examining how we have responded or reacted to these changes, we may better understand how the environment has affected mankind. In light of our current concerns for environment, we may discover better methods of managing our existing resources in order to learn how to live within our limits.

Vast amounts of knowledge can be gained from archeological studies, providing us with insight to the human and environmental problems facing us now and in the future. But all of these connections to our past, our cultures, our perspective of human time, are slowly being stolen. If these remnants are not protected, the ability for all of us to touch our past will be gone.

Protecting our past

In the past decades, as the rate of destruction to cultural resources grew unchecked, more and more funds that could have been used otherwise were spent restoring vandalized sites. The penalties contained within the existing laws were not strong enough to deter the vandal, the looter or professional pothunter. In 1979 Congress took an important step to help preserve our nation's cultural heritage by passing the Archeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA).

Under ARPA a person can be convicted of a felony for disturbing or removing artifacts from Federal land. If damage to a site and/or commercial value of the artifacts removed exceeds \$5,000, convictions can result in a fine of up to \$100,000 and/or a prison sentence of up to five years. The act also allows for the seizure of all equipment, including vehicles and boats, used during the violation. Anyone involved in the trafficking of artifacts obtained in violation of the law can be similarly convicted.



Graffiti on rock art.



Vandalized site.

The Army Corps of Engineers manages hundreds of cultural sites on land surrounding its reservoirs because Native American and early Euro-American populations were attracted to and settled near water. The Corps has an ongoing program to identify, evaluate, and preserve cultural resources on lands it administers. Many of these sites have been determined to be significant on a local, regional, or national level and have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Investigations of these sites are ongoing. The sites can be harmed and important information lost if they are not left intact. An ARPA permit to conduct legitimate archeological investigations by qualified researchers on Corps land can be obtained at the District address on the back cover. Through these investigations, our cultural resources are being preserved, protected, and interpreted for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

What you can do to help

You can help us protect our cultural heritage. Corps of Engineers rangers constantly patrol archeologically sensitive areas and monitor the condition of cultural resources on Corps lands. Local law enforcement agencies also provide assistance. Federal and state cultural resources laws are strictly enforced, but all of these efforts are not enough. Our past is still being vandalized. We need your help.

- ° Report vandalism. If you witness someone vandalizing an archeological site on Corps land, report the violation immediately to the nearest Corps project office. To enlist the public's assistance, there is a reward system for information which results in a conviction.

- ° Please leave artifacts undisturbed in their place. Encourage others to do the same. Respect our resources. If artifacts are removed from the surface of a site, researchers' efforts to locate and identify the resource becomes very difficult and sometimes impossible where all traces have been obliterated.

- ° Please do not deface rock art in any way. Performing rubbings on petroglyphs are not allowed, because it can be destructive to the resource. Do not chalk petroglyph designs for the purpose of highlighting them for photographs. Pictures taken with the proper lighting at the right time of day can be more effective and more realistic than chalked images.

- ° Be a steward of the past. Support local or state archeological societies. Protect sites on your own land. If you use off-road vehicles, use them only in designated areas.

- ° During your visit to a Corps of Engineers facility, please enjoy, but don't destroy, our nation's cultural heritage.

Cultural resources tomorrow?

Plunderers of the past, culture thieves, pothunters, thieves of time. Whatever label is given to them, they are guilty of damaging our cultural heritage—a legacy to be handed down from one generation to another. Our cultural resources are irreplaceable. They are non-renewable. Damage to them is irreversible. Removing the pieces of prehistory and history from the ground prevents the reconstruction of the entire puzzle of the past and passing it on to future generations. Will we be able to touch the past tomorrow? We don't know.



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**

Portland District

If you observe an archeological site on Corps land being vandalized, please report the violation to the Resource Manager at the applicable project office.

The Dalles-John Day	(503) 296-1181
Bonneville Dam	(503) 374-8344
Upper Willamette Valley	(503) 937-2131
Mid Willamette Valley	(503) 367-5124
Rogue River Basin	(503) 878-2255

If you have any questions regarding the Corps of Engineers cultural resource management program, please direct your inquiry to: USACE, Portland District, P.O. Box 2946, 319 S.W. Pine Street, Portland, OR 97208-2946, Telephone: (503) 221-4974.



This land is our land